

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 03519 130901Z

13

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01 IO-14 SR-02 ORM-03

ACDA-19 /172 W

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R 121109Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4218

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ISLAMABAD 3519

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, BG

SUBJ: AZIZ AHMED STATMENT ON TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

REF: NEW DELHI 4860

SUMMARY: MINSTATE AZIZ AHMED HAS ANNOUNCED THAT GOP, ALTHOUGH NOT OBLIGED TO DO SO, WOULD CONSIDER PUNISHING REPATRIATED PAK POWS FOUND TO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES IN FORMER EAST PAKISTAN. MINSTATE TOLD PRESS HE EXPECTED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH TO BE ESTABLISHED "SOON", BEFORE RELATIONS WITH INDIA RESUMED. HE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ARMS REDUCTION TALKS WITH INDIA. END SUMMARY.

1. AZIZ AHMED, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MET WITH PRESS APRIL 11 TO READ LONG PREPARED STATEMENT AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ON JUST-CONCLUDED DELHI TRIPARTITE TALKS. TEXT OF STATEMENT BEING POUCHED
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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 03519 130901Z

DEPARTMENT, DACCA AND DELHI. (MUCH OF IT CONSISTED OF

LONG REVIEW OF INDO-PAK-BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENTS SINCE DECEMBER 1971, WITH HEAVY EMPHASIS ON PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S CONTRIBUTIONS.)

2. WITH REGARD AGREEMENT ON DROPPING WAR CRIMES TRIALS OF THE 195 PAK POWS, STATEMENT NOTED THAT BDG HAD MADE THIS DECISION AS "AN ACT OF CLEMENCY" AND LAUDED IT AS "MOST IMPORTANT DECISION WITH FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SUBCONTINENT." IN LATER PASSAGE, STATEMENT ASSERTED THAT IF TRIALS HAD BEEN HELD "WHETHER IN DACCA OR ISLAMABAD, THE PAINFUL DRAMA OF 1971 WOULD BE RE-ENACTED...MEMORIES OF THE DREADFUL HAPPENINGS OF THAT YEAR WOULD BE REVIVED AND THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION...WOULD RECEIVE A SETBACK." BOTH PARTIES THUS AGREED BEST COURSE WAS "TO FORGIVE AND FORGET THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST."

3. AS FAR AS GOP WAS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, STATEMENT ADDED THAT "MATTERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO REST AT THAT." ALTHOUGH COMMISSION SET UP BY BHUTTO IN EARLY 1972 TO EXAMINE BACKGROUND AND CONDUCT OF DECEMBER 1971 WAR HAD ALREADY SUBMITTED ITS REPORT (WHICH GOP HAS NEVER RELEASED), COMMISSION HAD ALL ALONG INTENDED TO RESUME ITS INQUIRY ONCE IT BECAME POSSIBLE TO INTERVIEW POWS DETAINED IN INDIA AND WOULD NOW DO SO ONCE POW REPATRIATION COMPLETED. "IF AS A RESULT OF THIS INQUIRY, THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN IS SATISFIED THAT CRIMES AND EXCESSES SUCH AS THOSE ALLEGED WERE IN FACT COMMITTED BY ANY OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR, IT WILL CONSIDER TAKING APPROPRIATE ACTION AGAINST SUCH PERSONS," STATEMENT DECLARED.

4. LATER, ANSWERING NEWSMEN'S QUESTIONS, MINSTATE EMPHASIZED THAT GOP HAD GIVEN NO COMMITMENT AT DELHI TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST POWS AND WAS UNDER NO LEGAL OBLIGATION TO DO SO. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT GOP HAD A MORAL OBLIGATION IN THE MATTER. ASKED WHETHER BDG HAD SUPPLIED LIST OF THE 195, HE SAID IT HAD NOT. ASKED IF PAKS WOULD WELCOME EVIDENCE SUPPLIED BY BDG AGAINST ANY OF THE 195, HE REPLIED "WE WOULD."

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 03519 130901Z

5. ON TRANSFER OF NON-BENGALEES TO PAKISTAN, STATEMENT EMPHASIZED THAT TRILATERAL AGREEMENT DID NOT "INVOLVE ANY CHANGE IN THE BASIC PRINCIPALS ON WHICH THAT DECISION WAS REACHED" AND THAT IT WAS NOT INTENTION OF DELHI MEETING TO EXPAND SCOPE OF 1973 AGREEMENT IN THIS AREA. STATEMENT ADDED THAT BANGLADESH FOMIN DID PROPOSE NEUTRAL INTERNATIONAL BODY TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY OF NON-BENGALEE APPLICANTS TO ENTER PAKISTAN BUT THAT

GOP HAD REJECTED IT AS INFRINGEMENT UPON SOVEREIGNTY.

6. DURING QUESTION PERIOD AZIZ AHMED WAS ASKED WHEN HE EXPECTED ESTABLISHMENT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH. HE EXPECTED THEM "VERY SOON", HE REPLIED, AND THOUGHT THEY WOULD COME BEFORE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH INDIA. THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THERE WAS ANY HITCH IN MATTER OF RESTORING RELATIONS WITH INDIA, HE ADDED, BUT IT WAS UP TO INDIA TO DECIDE WHICH ISSUES SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY.

7. ASKED IF HE SAW ANY POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTA ON MUTUAL ARMS REDUCTION, AZIZ AHMED SAID THAT HE HAD IN FACT RAISED THIS MATTER WITH WARAN SINGH DURING SEPARATE MEETNG IN DELHI AND THAT "WE HAVE AGREED THAT THIS IS A MATTER WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS."

8. COMMENT: EVEN THOUGH CAREFULLY HEDGED BY REFERENCE TO FUTURE FINDINGS OF HAMOODUR RAHMAN COMMISSION, AZIZ AHMED'S SUGGESTION THAT GOP MIGHT ITSELF PUNISH POWS FOR CRIMES COMMITTED IN EAST WING DURING 1971 INVOLVES A CERTAIN RISK FOR GOP. WHILE MINSTATE WAS EMPHATIC THAT PAKS DID NOT OBLIGATE THEMSELVES TO DO SO, WE SUSPECT AZIZ AHMED MAY HAVE GIVEN AN INFORMAL UNDERTAKING ALONG THESE LINES TO BANGLADESH FONMIN. BYROADE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WAR CRIMES, POW, AGREEMENTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ISLAMA03519
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740086-0191
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740446/aaaabpeo.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NEW DELHI 4860
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <07-Aug-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AZIZ AHMED STATMENT ON TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT
TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, BG, (AHMED, AZIZ)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005